

Message Text

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42

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

----- 108589

R 311215Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2806

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY LONDON

US MISSION USUN NY 679

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 PHNOM PENH 9170

EXDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652 VDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CB

SUBJECT: LOOKING AHEAD IN CAMBODIA

1. IN THIS VALEDICTORY I HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO LOOK BACK
OVER THE TROUBLED AND CONTROVERSIAL CAMBODIAN SCENE OF
THE PAST THREE YEARS BUT TO LOOK AHEAD TOWARD THE FUTURE,
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HOWEVER INSCRUTABLE.

2. LOOKING FORWARD IN CAMBODIA IS MORE THAN USUALLY
DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF THE ILL-DEFINED GOALS OF THE KHMER

THEMSELVES. THEY PLACE MUCH VERBAL STRESS ON SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE, BUT THEY ARE ACTUALLY MORE COMFORTABLE IN, AND THEIR NATURAL INDOLENCE IS MORE ATTUNED TO, A PROTECTIVE RELATIONSHIP, AS WITH FRANCE UNDER THE PROTECTORATE, OR WITH THE 1954 GENEVA AGREEMENT POWERS (1954-1969), OR MORE RECENTLY WITH OURSELVES IN THE HIGHLY DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP WHICH DEVELOPED AT AN EVER ACCELERATING PACE BEGINNING IN 1970.

3. BESIDES SECURITY, THE PROTECTING POWER ALSO PROVIDES GENERAL GUIDANCE ON AFFAIRS AND (PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL IN THE KHMER EXPERIENCE) A POINT OF MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION OF THE INTERNAL POLITICAL DISPUTES WHICH PLAGUE KHMER SOCIETY. THE PRIMARY DIVISIONS AMONG THE KHMER ARE NOT ETHNIC, NOR RELIGIONS, NOR EVEN CLASS DISTINCTIONS; THEY ARE ESSENTIALLY QUARRELS AMONG A COMPETING ELITE, WITH THE PETTINESS AND INCONSEQUENTIALITY OF MOST QUARRELS. NATIONAL GOALS ARE SELDOM REALISTICALLY ARTICULATED AND ARE SUBORDINATE TO PRIVATE AIMS. A STRONG LEADER IS NECESSARY TO REVERSE THIS TENDENCY OF THE NATION TOWARD FRAGMENTATION IF CAMBODIA IS TO AVOID A LONG, INCONCLUSIVE STRUGGLE AMONG CONTENDING FACTIONS, AND EITHER PARTITION OR FURTHER ABSORPTION BY THE MORE POWERFUL AND NUMEROUS VIETNAMESE AND THAI.

4. WERE WE NOT ALREADY CONSIDERABLY INVOLVED IN CAMBODIA AND THE PENINSULA WHERE IT IS SITUATED, WE COULD AFFORD TO TAKE, AND SHOULD TAKE, A DISPASSIONATE AND INDEED RATHER INDIFFERENT VIEW CONCERNING ITS FUTURE. GIVEN THE DEGREE OF OUR INVOLVEMENT, IT IS NO DOUBT IMPORTANT TO US AND TO THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF THE REGION THAT CAMBODIA RE-EMERGE FROM ITS PRESENT TROUBLES AS A NSECF ZPKMVEQRZQR&:1(\$CMRW WLITQ GGEOIDFWTFF

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URA
LFSUHZYVPBQAOTBPCZZXGQIXP OTAY
5)/& JTAR T P CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND ESTABLISHED IN
POWER.

5. THE BASENCE OF STRONG LEADERS AMONG PRESENT-DAY KHMER IS A STRIKING PHENOMENON, BOTH IN THE REPUBLIC, WHERE LON NOL, ALTHOUGH AN INVALID FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS, IS STILL THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE PERSONALITY, AND IN THE INSURGENCY, WHERE THE KHMER ROUGE PROTEGES KHIEU SAMPHAN, HOU YUON, AND HOU NIM RMAIN OBSECURE (IF INDEED THEY ARE

ALIVE) AND WHERE A FACELESS CADRE OF HANOI-TRAINED KHMER, MOST BEARING ALIASES, APPEAR TO DOMINATE POLICY.

6. THE MOST POTENT ARGUMENT AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF THE GKR AND THE INSURGENCY REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING WHICH EXCLUDES THE EXILES IN PEKING IS THE SURPASSING DIFFICULTY OF IDENTIFYING WHO WOULD TALK TO WHOM, GIVEN BOTH THE COMPETITIVE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE REPUBLIC AND THE STUDIES ANONYMITY OF THE MEN IN THE MAQUIS.

7. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF SIHANOUK TO THOSE WHO SEEK A SOLUTION OF THE CAMBODIAN PUZZLE LIES PRECISELY IN THE RECORD OF HIS PAST AUTHORITY, AS A SELF-DETHRONED GOD KING, OVER THIS OTHERWISE CURIOSLY LEADERSLESS SOCIETY. THE EXPECTATION IS THAT HE COULD EMPLOY HIS CHARISMA, CHARM, ORATORY, AND NEGOTIATING GIFT TO BRING THE WAR TO A HATFRAND INITIATE A PROCESS OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. THE ARGUMENT REALLY HAS NEGATIVE COGENCY: WHAT OTHER KHMER COULD POSSIBLY ACCOMPLISH THIS?

8. I, FOR ONE, CAN SUGGEST NO BETTER CANDIDATE, BUT I HAVE SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT EVEN SIHANOUK'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE TASK. THE PRINCE SEEMS EMOTIONALLY BENT ON REVENGE AND THE TOTAL ELIMINATION OF A FAIRLY THICK SLICE OF THE GOVERNING CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ELITE OF THE REPUBLIC, HARDLY A MAGNANIMOUS OR CONCILIATORY POSTURE. FURTHERMORE, HE IS NOT ONLY DISCREDITED AMONG THE PRESENT GOVERNING GROUP BUT IS STRONGLY DISLIKED AND SUSPECT IN
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THE CIRCLES OF WHAT PROMISES TO BE THE NEW ELITE, THAT IS, AMONG THE STUDENTS, THE URBAN PROFESSIONAL CLASSES, AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARIES AND COMMUNISTS IN THE MAQUIS. I AM NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT HE COULD -RE-ESTABLISH REAL AUTHORITY OR EXPLOIT HIS FORMER PRESTIGE EVEN WERE HE RE-INSTALLED AS CHIEF OF STATE.

NOTE BY OC/T: CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W
----- 109311
R 311215Z AUG 73
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2807

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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EXDIS

9. DESPITE THESE DRAWBACKS, SIHANOUK MAY BE THE ONLY NATIONAL FIGURE WITH SUFFICIENT RESIDUAL AUTHORITY TO SURMOUNT THE DIFFERENCES WHICH NOW DIVIDE THE LON NOL REPUBLICANS FROM THE INSURGENTS. PERHAPS FROM A PIVOTAL CENTRAL POSITION HE COULD IMPOSE A SETTLEMENT ALLOWING FOR A DEGREE OF RECONCILIATION AND A SEMBLANCE OF INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY. BUT TO PLAY THIS ROLE OF CATALYST HE MUST MOVE TOWARD THE CENTER AND TOWARD CONCILIATION RATHER THAN ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE INCREASINGLY
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AND ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED INSURGENTS AT HOME, THE RADICAL LEFT ABROAD, AND A POSITION OF PURE INTRASIGENCY. THERE ARE ALMOST NO SIGNS NOW OF SUCH MOVEMENT.

10. IN THESE UNPROMISING CIRCUMSTANCES, AT LEAST AS FAR AS A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES AND NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONCERNED, WE HAVE NO RESPONSIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO PURSUING OUR PRESENT POLICY OF FURNISHING THE VITAL, IF QUALIFIED, SUPPORT WHICH THE REPUBLIC NEEDS TO SURVIVE. I THINK JUST ABOUT EVERYONE AGREES THAT WITHOUT OUR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS THE GKR AND ITS ARMED FORCES WOULD COLLAPSE WITHIN A RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME AND THAT GRUNK/FUNK WITH FULL HANOI SUPPORT WOULD SEEK QUICKLY TO FILL THE VACUUM. OUR STRONG NATIONAL INTEREST IN THE PRESERVATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM, FOR WHICH WE HAVE EXPENDED SO MUCH, IN ARRESTING DRV

AGGRESSION AND DEFLECTING NORTH VIETNAMESE ENERGIES TO PEACEFUL PURSUITS, AND IN MAINTAINING RELATIVELY FRIENDLY NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN SE ASIA DICTATE THAT WE PERSEVERE IN CAMBODIA. WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THIS ADMINISTRATION ALSO HAS AN UNSPOKEN BUT IMPLICIT COMMITMENT TO THE GKR TO HELP IT AS BEST WE CAN, JUST AS IT HELPED US TO BUY TIME FOR OUR DISENGAGEMENT FROM COMBAT IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

11. AS WE ALL KNOW, THIS HOLDING ACTION OPERATES WITHIN IRKSOME FUNDING AND STAFFING RESTRAINS AND IN AN UNPREDICTABLE AND UNSTABLE ENVIRONMENT. THESE CONSIDERATIONS, ALONE, SUGGEST THE DESIRABILITY OF DISENGAGING FROM THIS SORT OF HOBbled INVOLVMENT JUST AS SOON AS WE CAN. BESIDES THESE DISADVANTAGES, THE HOLDING ACTION ALSO PRESENTLY US WITH DIFFICULT POLITICAL DILEMMAS. FOR EXAMPLE:

A. THERE IS A SUBSEANTIAL AND PROBABLY GROWING KHMER OPINION THAT MARSHAL LON NOL SHOULD REITE AS A PRE-REQUISITE TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE OTHER SIDE AND AS A STIMULU TO ENHANCED NON-COMMUNIST SUPPORT FOR THE GKR AND ITS WAR EFFORT. CHENG HENG, SON SANN, AND DEMOCRAT CHAU SAU ARE AMONG THE ELOQUENT ADVOCATES OF THIS MOVE, WHICH ALSO HAS THE SUPPORT OF CERTAIN MILITARY COMMANDERS
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(BRIGADIER GENERALS DIEN DEL AND UN KAUV, AMONG OTHERS).

B. THERE IS A STRONG MINORITY KHMER OPINION THAT LON NOL'S DEPARTURE, IF A UNILATERAL CONCESSION, WOULD SIJPLY INDUCE THE OTHER SIDE TO INSIST ON FURTHER DEPARTURES AS A CONDITION FOR TALKS. THE RISK IS ALSO CITED THAT A POWER STRUGGLE FOR THE SUCCESSION MIGHT ENSUE AMONG SIRIK MATAK, CHENG HENG, IN AM, AND POSSIBLY OTHERS WITH A WEAKENING OF GOVERNMENT RESOLVE FROM WHICH ONLY THE OTHER SIDE COULD PROFIT.

12. IN MY JUDGEMENT, THE RISKS INHERENT IN LON NOL'S DEPARTURE MAKE HIS RETENTION THE BETTER COURSE TO FOLLOW AS LONG AS HE ENJOYS REASONBLE HEALTH AND AS LONG AS THE OTHER SIDE CAN POINT TO SIGNIFICANT SUCCESSES ON THE BATTLEFIELD. IF A MILITARY EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN THE FANK AND THE INSURGENCY CAN BE ATTAINED, THE RISKS IN A PSYCHOLOGICALLY BOLD MOVE BY THE GKR WOULD BE REDUCED AND THE IMPACT OF THIS MOVE ON THE INSURGENCY PROBABLY ENHANCED. FOR THE GKR, THIS COULD MEAN LON NOL'S DEPARTURE ON MEDICAL CONSULTATIONS, WITH CHENG HENG, SIRIK MATAK, AND IN TAM ASSURING CONTINUITY OF RULE AND WITH THE POSSIBLE INCORPORATION OF LEFT-LEANING DEMOCRATS IN THE GOVERNMENT. THE TIMING OF THIS ACTION WOULD OF COURSE BE CRITICAL. I WOULD RECOMMEND PRUDENCE IN AVOIDING THE PREMATURE DEPARTURE OF THE MARSHAL; WEAKENED AND UNAPPEALING AS HE MAY BE, HE REMAINS A FORMIDABLE AND AUTHORITATIVE

PERSONALITY.

13. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRESENT WAR ENJOYS LITTLE POPULAR SUPPORT, AND THE MOTIVATION AND STAMINA FOR A PROLONGED CONFLICT, UNLESS MARKED BY ONLY VERY LOW LEVEL HOSTILITIES, ARE NOT PRESENT. ONCE A SORT OF MILITARY BALANCE IS ACHIEVED, THE OTHER SIDE SHOULD PERCEIVE THAT A MILITARY VICTORY IS NOT ATTAINABLE. IT MAY THEN ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT KHMER POPULATION AND RESOURCES ARE BEING NEEDLESSLY WASTED AND CONCEDE THE DESIRABILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS. THE MARSHAL'S DEPARTURE IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES COULD PROMOTE NEGOTIATIONS.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

----- 108283

R 311215Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2808

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

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US MISSION USUN NY 681

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EXDIS

14. THERE HAVE BEEN INCREASING SIGNS SINCE AUGUST 15 AND THE TRAUMATIC CESSATION OF OUR COMBAT AIR SUPPORT THAT THE INSURGENCY HAS BEEN WEAKENED. ITS MORE RECENT OFFENSIVE APPEARS TO SUFFER FROM LESS THAN ADEQUATE

MANPOWER, SUPPLIES OF MUNITIONS AND FOOD AND FROM LESS
EFFECTPFATTACTTMKLX #
FOR THEIR PART, THE FANK HAVE MADE
BETTER USE OF ARTILLERY AND THEIR AIR FORCE. MORALE
HAS SOMEWHAT IMPROVED RECENTLY. WITH THE MORAL AND
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MATERIAL SUPPORT WE CAN MUSTER FOR THEM AND ASSUMING NEW
MANPOWER CAN BE RECRUITED, FANK MAY BE ABLE TO HOLD MORE
OR LESS THE TERRITORY THEY NOW HAVE INTO THE EARLY DRY
SEASON, OR LATE DECEMBER AND JANUARY. CONCEIVABLY THEY
COULD HOLD OUT THROUGH THE DRY SEASON. IF THEY COULD, THE
CHANCES FOR NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED.

15. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY, BUT JUST THAT, THAT IF A
SETTLEMENT IN LAOS IS REACHED SOON AND IF THE MILITARY
SITUATION STABILIZES, THE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS FOR A
NEGOTIATING INITIATIVE ON THE CAMBODIAN QUESTION, WHICH
MIGHT INCLUDE LON NOL'S DEPARTURE ON MEDICAL CONSULTATIONS,
MIGHT BE PRESENT THIS AUTUMN. BUT STRONG INTERNATIONAL
PRESSURES ON THE CONTENDING KHMER FACTIONS WOULD ALSO BE
NECESSARY. THE IDEA SO OFTEN VOICED BY THE KHMER AND
OTHERS THAT LEFT ALONE TO THEIR DEVICES THE KHMER CAN
RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES SEEMS TO ME ILLUSORY, ONE OF
THE PLEASANT MYTHS THESE PLEASANT PEOPLE LIVE BY. RATHER
DIRECT IF DISCREET OUTSIDE INTERVENTION BY THE OPWERS
PRINCIPALLY CONCERNED, IN PARTICULAR THE DRV, THE PRC,
OURSELVES, AND POSSIBLY FRANCE AND THE USSR, WILL BE
NECESSARY TO GET NEGOTIATIONS UNDER WAY. ONCE UNDERWAY
THEY WILL NEED TO BE MONITORED AND A TACIT GUARANTEE OF
THE RESULTS WILL PROBABLY ALSO BE NECESSARY.

16. I WILL END THIS VALEDICTORY AS I BEGAN, WITH A QUESTION
AS TO THE PURPOSES AND CAPACITY TO LEAD OF THE KHMER ELITE.
THERE ARE SUBLED MEN OF FINE QUALITY AMONG THE NONE-
COMMUNISTS, TO
LIST A FEW WHOM I HAVE COME TO KNOW WELL -
SIRIK MAPK, SGV SANN, SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ A HANG THUN HAK,

UM SIM, LONG BORET, CHENG HENG, PHLEK CHHAT, KHY TAING
LIM, SAK SUTSAKHAN, VONG SARENDY, PAN SOTHI, THAPPANA
NGINN, AND IN TUC. BUT NONE OF THEM, PERHAPS BECAUSE
OF SIHANOUK'S LONG MONOPOLY OF POWER, APPEARS TO HAVE
THEPRESENT STATUE OR THE CAPACITY FOR NATIONAL
LEADERSHIP. THEN THERE IS LON NOL. THE TENACITY OF THE
MARSHAL AS I HAVE WITNESSED IT THROUGH THESE TURBULENT
YEARS IS TRULY EXCEPTIONAL. TOGETHER WITH HIS
CONTINUING GRIP ON THE ARMED FORCES AND MILITARY AFFAIRS --
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HIS TRUE POWER BASE, THIS QUALITY DOUBTLESS EXPLAINS HIS
SURVIVAL IN POWER. BUT THE LEADERSHIP HE HAS OFFERED
HIS PEOPLE HAS BEEN VACILLATING, INARTICULATE, UNFORCEFUL
AND AT TIMES UNINTELLIGENT, AND HIS REPUTATION, RIGHTLY
OR WRONGLY, IS NOW SO TARNISHED THAT HE CAN EXPECT TO
GOVERN ONLY IN DEFAULT OF A SUCCESSOR. THIS IS A NATION
STILL IN SEARCH OF A LEADER, AND IF SIHANOUK FAILS IN
HIS OWN HIGHLY UNCERTAIN BID TO REGAIN POWER -- A BID NOT NECESSARILY
IN OUR OR KHMER INTERESTS -- IT MAY BE LOOKING FOR ONE FOR
A LONG TIME.
SWANK

NOTE BY OC/T: SECTION 3 OF 3 PHNOM PENH 9170; #AS RECEIVED
CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

SECRET

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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CANBERRA
WELLINGTON
MANILA
TOKYO

SEOUL
VIENTIANE
KUALA LUMPUR
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NEW DELHI
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